

Elections and Political Processes: Political processes, including elections, are competitive and more effectively reflect the will of an informed citizenry

Free and fair elections are indispensable to democracy, but elections alone do not yield democracy. Although other elements of democracy can develop before competitive elections are held, a country can not be truly democratic until its citizens have the regular opportunity to choose their representatives.

Elections can be a democracy-building tool to take advantage of political openings and expand political participation. In recent years, elections have been a principal vehicle for democratization, as authoritarian governments increasingly have fallen to democratic forces. Electoral campaigns also tend to foster political liberalization. For an election to be free and fair, certain civil liberties, such as freedoms of speech, association, and assembly are required. Elections offer political parties and civic groups an opportunity to mobilize and organize supporters and share alternative platforms with the public.

Elections are often seen as a step towards resolving conflict following years of civil war. In many parts of the world, armed movements have agreed to put down weapons in exchange for the opportunity to contest power in fair elections.

USAID programs are designed to help ensure that elections are competitive and reflect the will of an informed citizenry, and that political institutions are representative and responsive. In countries where an election can help spur or accelerate a transition to democracy, the institutional capacity to carry out elections is often weak. Election commissions may not yet exist or they may lack the technical capacity or political will to administer a fair election. Electoral laws may be antiquated and require major revisions. Legislators drafting a new law may lack sufficient knowledge of electoral systems and practices.

In such countries, citizens will likely be unaware of their rights and responsibilities as voters and political participants. They may be unfamiliar with the mechanics of voting or the range of parties and candidates from which they can choose. Independent civic groups, if any exist, will lack the resources to educate citizens and press for democratic reforms.

Some countries have held a series of widely accepted elections, but nonetheless have failed to develop representative political institutions for a variety of reasons. Political parties in countries across the globe are viewed as distant, elite organizations unable or unwilling to articulate or represent most citizens' concerns. Many are personality-based or lack the organizational capacity to campaign nationwide, present ideologically compatible candidates, and recruit and train poll watchers.

Women and ethnic and religious groups are often excluded from political participation. Newly elected officials frequently need training and other support to effectively staff, administer, and oversee government agencies and fulfill their roles as representatives in a democratic system.

After much experience, USAID has refined its ability to address these issues. The job involves pre-election assessments; training election commissioners, elected officials, poll watchers and local and international observers; buying and producing election equipment from ballot boxes to the ballots themselves; helping governments and citizens develop civic education programs; and planning how to protect and count the ballots as quickly as possible. It is a big job—transferring skills and new values—for which many transitional countries are minimally prepared.

Because USAID strives to support electoral events as part of a broader political picture, pre-election and post-election assistance is also emphasized as part of a long-term strategy to ensure that reforms are sustainable. The Center therefore focuses on strengthening electoral commissions, political parties, civic groups, and newly elected government bodies in order to promote long-term institutional development.

1. Program Status

Elections and political processes continue to attract considerable interest within the USG, and the Center has responded rapidly to key foreign policy priorities and to field requests for sustainable political process

assistance in a number of critical countries including **Croatia, Indonesia, Kosovo, Mexico, Nigeria, and Peru**. The CEPPS mechanism continues to be in high demand in these and other countries, absorbing approximately \$12 million in assistance during the fiscal year. G/DG published and disseminated extensive technical guidance on political party development assistance and managing assistance in support of elections and political processes.

2. Statement of Purpose

Elections are the ultimate means by which citizens hold their government accountable. Elections can also be a primary tool to expand political openings, increase citizens' political participation, and offer political parties and civil society organizations an opportunity to mobilize and organize supporters and develop alternative platforms with the public. About 10 percent of all FY 2001 appropriated funds requested by USAID for DG promotion is likely to be expended in support of elections and political processes. USAID Missions with elections and political processes objectives now number 33.

In order to strengthen USAID programming and reinforce field-based efforts in the elections and political processes area, G/DG develops strategic approaches and program support to assist elections administration activities in an impartial and professional manner; train local organizations to monitor elections and educate voters about their rights and responsibilities; improve citizen representation within political parties; and train newly elected legislators and local officials. To do this, the Center designs and manages new implementing mechanisms, develops technical leadership materials, carries out field assessments, and assists the field in writing election strategies. G/DG's approach focuses on institutionalizing and sustaining democratic electoral and political processes.

3. Key Results

Foreign Policy. The Center consistently demonstrated its capacity to support and influence key foreign policy objectives by designing, funding, and implementing new elections-related programs, often in a fast-paced environment. This is due in large part to its CEPPS mechanism, which is recognized within USAID, and at State and the NSC as a mechanism that can quickly provide critical assistance to foreign policy priorities. In addition, given their strategic and programmatic expertise, Center personnel have been increasingly asked by other USG offices to participate in critical foreign policy electoral initiatives.

- Continuing on last year's involvement in providing technical expertise to the elections component of the **Kosovo** peace negotiations, this year G/DG staff played a key role in designing programs and ensuring speedy implementation of DG-related reconstruction programs in Kosovo, in coordination with OTI. Center personnel helped to formulate election/civil registration activity immediately following the cessation of the conflict. This work ensured that there was a rapid-response team on the ground soon after the bombing ended. Subsequently, a stalled election process was revived through development of an election implementation plan. USAID's quick-response mechanisms enabled immediate deployment of political party trainers and assistance following the conflict.
- Citizen confidence in pivotal **Indonesian** parliamentary elections was achieved through organization of an international observation mission, managed under Center mechanisms and including G/DG staff, and issuance of impartial reports on the process.
- In **Nigeria**, Center mechanisms were used to provide USG assistance for voter education, elections administration, and political party and civil society poll-watcher training. G/DG staff also participated in an election observation team. Without the CEPPS mechanism, this assistance could not have been provided nationwide in time for the elections.
- Through Center mechanisms, post-election programming in **Indonesia** and **Nigeria** has bolstered the transition to democracy in those two fragile countries, which held breakthrough elections this year. For example in Nigeria, G/DG efforts ensured that President Olusegun Obasanjo's request for a

good governance seminar for the full cabinet and senior executive officials resulted in an NGO team on the ground in just four days. Training curriculum and the facilitators' guide were created through a process that involved U.S. governance experts and Nigerian academics/trainers and National Assembly staff members. The resulting three-day highly-lauded training workshops on good governance were conducted over a two-week period in 16 sites throughout Nigeria for 360 newly elected House of Representatives members, 109 Senate members, and 940 state legislators.

- Center staff worked with the **Russia** mission to craft the embassy's policy for U.S. grantees in response to a newly approved electoral law—a highly sensitive situation in terms of U.S.-Russian relations as well as USAID-NGO relations.

Technical Expertise. G/DG shared its technical expertise in this subject area through publication and dissemination of technical documents, and design and delivery of subject-specific training.

- As part of its Technical Publication Series, the Center published new elections and political processes guidance. *USAID Political Party Development Assistance* was distributed to USAID DG field officers and used in providing guidance to **Haiti, Mozambique, and Serbia**. An issue of *Democracy Dialogue* was also published on the subject and distributed to a wider, external audience.
- Also published in the series was *Managing Assistance in Support of Political and Electoral Processes*. The document, which summarizes results from case studies of USAID experience and relevant studies, updates USAID's technical guidance in the elections and political process area, including assistance for political party development, elections administration, local elections, and the immediate post-elections period.
- The Center hosted discussions on elections and political processes issues at its annual partners conference and DG officers training workshop, as well as an elections-specific workshop held in September. During the training workshop, G/DG staff led two seminars on elections and political processes assistance. For its partners, the Center moderated and served as panelists on sessions addressing the institutionalization of elections assistance and provision of political party development assistance.

Field Support. In addition to those missions mentioned above, Center staff provided on-site support to several other USAID Missions in the form of long- and short-term TDYs, as well as direct assistance from Washington. Implementing mechanisms developed and made available to the field by G/DG continued to provide rapid-response capability.

- G/DG provided six weeks of direct support in **Croatia**. Prior to critical breakthrough elections there, Center staff assisted the mission by identifying gaps in its assistance to local NGOs involved in the "get out the vote" campaign, and by developing post-elections ROL and local government programs. This ensured that the mission was poised to implement new programs in support of the newly elected reformers immediately following elections.
- The Center provided guidance and support to the mission in **Uganda** on programming options to support a fair and open debate and referendum on the issue of whether to re-introduce political parties.
- G/DG staff traveled to **Bosnia** to support the mission's elections programming by helping analyze the results of municipal elections and implications for USAID programs.
- The primary vehicle for the delivery of G/DG assistance in elections and political processes remained the Center's cooperative agreement with CEPPS. Missions that accessed CEPPS in FY 1999 include Benin, Bosnia, Croatia, DROC, Guinea, Indonesia, Kosovo, Liberia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, South Africa, Uganda, and

Zimbabwe. In **Bosnia**, CEPPS partners were engaged in mobilizing the first domestic, multi-ethnic NGO election monitoring effort. In **Peru**, pre-election assessments identified flawed electoral processes and less than democratic environments under which elections were to be held. Democratic opposition political parties in **Croatia** received technical assistance and training in public opinion analysis, message development, communications strategies, and coalition building.

Program Management/Direct Development Impact. With the significant increase in the use of CEPPS, improved systems to sustain quality program management are being put into place. Additionally, to ensure that missions have mechanisms to use for political process programming, G/DG is lifting the ceiling and adding a year to the current CEPPS cooperative agreement. CEPPS usage has remained steady over the past three years, garnering close to \$12 million in mission buy-ins each year.

- In FY 1999, Center funding made possible the development of handbooks on political party building, media monitoring, parallel vote tabulation, civic organizing, best practices in citizen participation and in legislative development, elections methodologies and standards, and lessons learned in promoting legal and constitutional reform for free and fair elections. Publication of these documents is expected next year.
- The Administration and Cost of Elections project (ACE), implemented with G/DG funds, is a unique on-line elections planning database produced in partnership with the United Nations (U.N.) and International IDEA. This project (www.aceproject.org) is notable in that it allows for greater self-sufficiency, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of election administration efforts. Over 5,000 copies of the CD-ROM version of ACE were distributed in 1999, and French and Spanish versions are due to be distributed shortly, thereby increasing the access of this information beyond English speakers and people with access to the Internet. USAID funding this year will expand the information on ACE to include a module on media—a critical aspect of ensuring free and fair elections—and will work to make the project sustainable without future USAID funding.
- G/DG continues to support the F. Clifton White Resource Center, which houses comprehensive information on elections and political processes worldwide through a collection of primary documentation. This year the resource center was used by **Mexico's** Federal Electoral Institute in planning for Mexico's upcoming elections, and by the Washington Office of the Kurdistan regional government to help develop materials for use by Kurdish officials in Iraq for their upcoming municipal elections. As IFES seeks alternative funding resources, the Center will be decreasing its funding.

Cross-fertilization between countries has been promoted through Center programs. For example, the budding Association of African Election Authorities, led by the president of the **Ghanaian** election commission, reinforced ties within the region when it observed the Nigerian elections this year. Through another activity implemented through G/DG mechanisms, **Guinean** political party leaders issued a joint declaration highlighting lessons learned following a visit to Morocco. The declaration, focusing on inter-party relations and internal party democracy, was a significant step in fostering inter-party dialogue and cooperation among polarized political actors.

G/DG support to the Latin American Political Leadership Academy through CEPPS has bolstered young leaders in **Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, and Venezuela**, enabling democratic renewal within political parties. In various world regions, the Center is fostering associations of election authorities and officials as a way of networking and building intra-regional cooperation to promote and sustain effective election administration beyond USAID assistance.

For **Nigeria's** breakthrough elections this year, the Center provided quick-response assistance to the Independent National Electoral Commission to carry out elections. G/DG also supported the deployment of international election observation missions as part of a multi-donor effort that significantly enhanced electoral transparency, government accountability, and Nigerian consensus on the elections'

outcome. Center funding has also begun to lay the groundwork for a strengthened national assembly, better executive-legislative relations, and improved electoral administration capacity.

Advanced skills training for political parties in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH) better prepared the democratic opposition for upcoming elections. In addition, the Center-supported formation of the Election Officials Association is a step towards BiH ownership of electoral administration in what previously has been an internationally-led effort. Funding to support institution-building with the leading coalition in **Mongolia** has helped keep it together and enable it to pass significant anti-corruption and ethics legislation.

4. *Performance and Prospects*

The Center continued to meet its targets including the provision of rapid election assistance to key countries, publication of new elections and political process technical guidance, concentration of CEPPS core funds on bi-lateral programs of high foreign policy interest, and awarding two new IQCs in political processes. G/DG is meeting other objectives such as publishing concept and case study technical guidance, supporting its partners to innovate new approaches in the field, and ensuring the sustainability of the ACE and F. Clifton White Resource Center.

During the fiscal year, G/DG welcomed a new senior elections and political processes technical advisor and two Presidential Management Interns to replace staff who left the Center. Focus has been on establishing a better management tracking system for CEPPS and the new IQCs, and a proper closeout of the CEPPS agreement. G/DG expects a wider dissemination of its elections manual and political party development assistance paper to integrate more effectively lessons learned into USAID's democracy assistance. Building on the political party development manual, G/DG, working with PPC, hopes to formalize the Agency's position on such assistance. The Center expects to continue to respond rapidly and strategically to increasing political imperatives in elections and political processes. Finally, the Center will continue to update its training modules in elections and political processes for the annual training conference.

5. *Principal Contractors, Grantees, or Agencies*

G/DG's elections and political processes implementing mechanisms comprise one cooperative agreement and two IQCs. The CEPPS cooperative agreement includes the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. An IQC with IFES was active during this fiscal year, and new IQCs have been awarded to IFES and Development Associates. During the fiscal year, G/DG also managed a cooperative agreement with The Asia Foundation to support G/WIP, which expired in March 2000.